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Bridgeport Generation Now, Bridgeport, CT

Testimony in Support of [HB 6616](#) - An Act Concerning the Expansion Of Husky Health Benefits To Those Ineligible Due To Immigration Status.

Dear Senator Lesser, Representative Gilchrest, and members of the Human Services Committee:

Our names are Callie Gale Heilmann and Gemeem Davis, and we are the Co-Directors of Bridgeport Generation Now, a grassroots civic engagement organization with over 300 members in Bridgeport, CT, fighting for a more just, equitable, democratic, and livable city. Bridgeport Generation Now is a member of Recovery For All—a statewide coalition bringing together more than 60 community, faith, and labor organizations across Connecticut. We strongly support HB 6616 to expand access to the HUSKY program to undocumented people in CT up to the age of 26.

It is unconscionable that in our state, undocumented people over 12 years old are excluded from Medicaid and CHIP programs (HUSKY in CT), Medicare, Access Health CT state exchange coverage and financial help, and private insurance coverage. Statewide, 58% of the roughly 113,000 undocumented immigrants in CT do not have any form of health insurance coverage -- which is extremely concerning during these past three years of a global pandemic.

In Bridgeport, we know firsthand how access to healthcare affects undocumented families' well-being, safety, and ability to thrive in our city. According to [Data Haven's 2021 Equity Report for Bridgeport](#), "due to differences in workplace benefits, income, and eligibility factors, Black and especially Latino people are less likely to have health insurance than white people." In fact, while only 8% of Connecticut residents between the ages of 19-64 are uninsured, in Bridgeport that number is 19% – and for our Latino residents that number jumps to 27%.

This is because [Mexican and Guatemalan families are the two biggest undocumented groups in Connecticut](#), with the next largest groups from Ecuador, Brazil, and Jamaica. And according to Data Haven, "the largest number of immigrants living in Bridgeport were born in Jamaica, followed by Mexico and Brazil."

Health care is a human right, and we all deserve access to health care, regardless of our immigration status and nation of origin. Families in Bridgeport should not have to worry about accessing life-saving, preventative, or emergency care simply because they cannot afford to pay. Decades of this policy cements disparate outcomes for Bridgeport families, and places a huge burden on our communities to care for family, friends and neighbors because the state won't.

The results are that in Bridgeport, Latino and Black children and families shoulder health burdens that are extremely higher than their white counterparts.

FIGURE 18: SELECTED HEALTH INDICATORS BY AGE AND RACE/ETHNICITY, SHARE OF ADULTS, BRIDGEPORT, 2015-2018

	Asthma				Diabetes				Hypertension			
	Total	White	Black	Latino	Total	White	Black	Latino	Total	White	Black	Latino
Ages 18 to 34	18%	12%	15%	22%	3%	0%	2%	5%	12%	10%	15%	10%
Ages 35 to 49	18%	18%	18%	19%	7%	6%	7%	8%	24%	29%	24%	22%
Ages 50 to 64	15%	15%	14%	22%	23%	19%	27%	33%	46%	33%	59%	44%
Ages 65 and older	17%	15%	16%	23%	29%	25%	30%	42%	64%	55%	77%	62%

In order to end this ever-evolving racist system that guarantees the outcome of deep racial disparities in our state, we must enact **anti-racist laws** and policies in Connecticut. And anti-racist laws and policies are ones that put our public resources in place to end racial and economic disparities and inequities.

We support HB 6616 and hope the committee will vote in favor. In the future, we urge this committee to continue working to expand HUSKY access to all immigrant people, regardless of age or immigration status. Thank you for your time, consideration, and leadership on this issue.

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